

## Navy carrier delays lead to housing woes

BY GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Delays in the construction of new aircraft carriers and retirement of older nuclear-powered ships are fueling a housing crunch at Naval Base Kitsap, one of the most expensive locations at which to serve in the Navy.

The Kitsap commander has announced the public-private operator of base housing has been told not to renew leases for units occupied by retirees, reservists and others to make way for an influx of sailors expected in the summer.

"We certainly appreciate the inconvenience," Capt. John Hale, commanding officer of NB Kitsap, said in a statement. "We're focused on our support to the active-duty family members, those who the Navy has or-

dered here, and they need to find a place to live."

Pressure on housing at the base is expected when the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan arrives at Kitsap in the summer. It's crossing the Pacific after nine years as the Navy's forward-homeported carrier, based in Yokosuka, Japan.

The Reagan will go into Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at Kitsap for a two-year overhaul. It was to replace the USS Nimitz, which finished a six-month maintenance period last week at the Bremerton, Wash., base.

The Nimitz had been slated to move to Naval Base Norfolk in Virginia in 2025 to be decommissioned and eventually dismantled. The Nimitz is the Navy's oldest active carrier, having been commissioned in 1975.

But the timeline for the Ni-

mitz move has been pushed to 2026 at the earliest. In the meantime, the Nimitz will remain at Kitsap along with the Reagan.

"The Navy has problems with the delivery delays of new carriers and how to dispose of old carriers," said Mark Cancian, a retired Marine colonel and now a senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

The Nimitz was to be replaced by the USS John F. Kennedy, the new Ford-class carrier being built at Newport News, Va. But delays caused by the coronavirus pandemic and new technology, such as electromagnetic systems to catapult aircraft off the deck, have put delivery behind schedule.

The Pentagon has already so-

licited interest in subcontractors to work on the eventual dismantling of the Nimitz, but where and when the work will be done is still under discussion.

The impact for Kitsap is finding a way to accommodate the crews of two aircraft carriers while the base is undergoing renovations that have caused a shortage of offices and other facilities.

In the past, the Navy solved the housing problems of ships in maintenance by requiring most crew to remain aboard in the shipyard.

Studies have shown, however, that living inside the equivalent of an industrial factory leads to deteriorating mental and physical health of the crew and, in some cases, an increase in suicide attempts.

## Debate debacle prompts questions from Democrat insiders

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — A sense of concern is growing inside the top ranks of the Democratic Party that leaders of Joe Biden's campaign and the Democratic National Committee are not taking seriously enough the impact of the president's troubling debate performance last week.

DNC Chairman Jaime Harrison and Biden campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez held a Saturday afternoon call with dozens of committee members across the country, a group of some of the most influential members of the party. They largely ignored Biden's weak showing Thursday night or the avalanche of criticism that followed.

Multiple committee members on the call, most granted anonymity to talk about the private discussion, described feeling like they were being gaslit — that they were being asked to ignore the dire nature of the party's predicament. The call, they said,

may have worsened a widespread sense of panic among elected officials, donors and other stakeholders.

Instead, the people said, Harrison offered what they described as a rosy assessment of Biden's path forward. The chat function was disabled and there were no questions allowed.

"I was hoping for more of a substantive conversation instead of, 'Hey, let's go out there and just be cheerleaders,' without actually addressing a very serious issue that unfolded on American television for millions of people to see," said Joe Salazar, an elected DNC member from Colorado, who was on the call. "There were a number of things that could have been said in addressing the situation. But we didn't get that. We were being gaslit."

Many donors, party strategists and rank-and-file DNC members are publicly and privately saying they want Biden, 81, to step aside to allow the party to select a younger

replacement at the Democratic National Convention in August. As of now, though, Biden's closest allies insist he remains well-positioned to compete against Republican Donald Trump and have given no indication they will push him to end his campaign.

Those best positioned to replace him — Vice President Kamala Harris, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer among them — reiterated their support for Biden after the debate.

Many are anxiously awaiting the first major round of post-debate public polling to determine their next steps.

Polls from CNN and 538/Ipsos conducted soon after the debate found that most debate-watchers thought Trump outperformed Biden. But the two men's favorability ratings remained largely unchanged, just as they did in the aftermath of Trump's conviction on charges in New York that he illegally participated in a hush money scheme to influence the 2016 election.

# Jury acquits Air Force general of sexual assault

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — A jury Saturday found an Air Force general not guilty of sexually assaulting a female subordinate, but convicted him of dereliction of duty and conduct unbecoming stemming from a night of sex and alcohol at an air base in 2023.

Maj. Gen. Phillip Stewart had pleaded guilty Monday to adultery and a second count of conduct unbecoming for pursuing an unprofessional relationship with the woman, a lieutenant colonel who worked in his office at the 19th Air Force.

Military judge Col. Matthew Stoffel sentenced Stewart to a reprimand, restriction to Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Air Force Base in Texas and a \$60,000 fine. Stewart will not be dismissed from the service.

"You've thrown a lot away as a result of your actions," Stoffel said. "You owe it to those individuals (who support you), your

family and the U.S. to return yourself to a productive member of society."

The sentence landed in the middle of what both sides asked for during a sentencing hearing following the verdict.

Lt. Col. Pete Havern, a prosecutor, had called for a \$50,000 fine, dismissal from service and some months confinement for Stewart.

Stewart's legal team requested the judge to consider jail time before dismissal.

Stewart, a fighter pilot, addressed the judge during sentencing and tearfully pleaded not to be dismissed from the service. He also noted during his five-minute statement that it was the sixth birthday of his younger of two daughters.

"It's hard to think about life outside the service," Stewart said. "I am so much more than this. I apologize for letting the Air Force down."

Stewart's service history and lack of any previous discipline

were part of the sentencing decision, Stoffel said. Because alcohol was involved in the allegations against Stewart, the judge encouraged him to seek treatment.

Stewart earns roughly \$18,000 a month and his fine will be forfeited from his pay for six months. Air Education and Training Command's Lt. Gen. Brian Robinson will write the reprimand as he decided to court-martial Stewart.

Rachel VanLandingham, a former Air Force attorney, said she agreed with the verdict of the jury but the sentence seemed "disproportionately light" given that Stewart commanded thousands of airmen.

"Instead, this meager sentence exposed the rank hypocrisy present in senior officers seemingly living by a different set of rule. This woefully light sentence also demonstrates a grave procedural defect in the military justice system — the lack of independent judges

who, under their robes, are military officers concerned about their careers and as supplicant to senior rank as everyone else. I'm disgusted," she said.

A special victim counsel read an impact statement from the lieutenant colonel who accused Stewart of misconduct and described the impact the reporting process and court-martial had on her marriage and career. She is retiring in November.

The jury of two women and six men, all three-star generals, deliberated for roughly eight hours Friday afternoon and Saturday morning before reaching the verdict about the sexual encounter that occurred in April 2023 at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

There was no dispute that the two had sex, leaving the jury to decide whether the woman's compliance without verbal consent was sexual assault or if she only felt guilty for cheating on her husband.

## CEOs charged with Navy admiral fight bribery allegations

*The Washington Post*

Two top executives of a New York-based technology services firm charged alongside the highest-ranking U.S. Navy admiral ever to face criminal indictment for bribery are fighting the charges, challenging federal prosecutors' decision to bring what one of their lawyers called a "politically motivated" military corruption case.

Charlie Kim, 50, and Meghan Messenger, 47, are set to plead not guilty Monday in Washington, D.C., with retired four-star Adm. Robert P. Burke, 62, formerly the Navy's former second-highest-ranking officer and top commander in Europe and Africa. The three were charged four weeks ago with conspiracy to commit bribery and bribery for Burke's alleged agreement to award a sole-source contract to Next Jump and to help it win future Navy business, in exchange for the promise of a \$500,000-a-

year job and stock options after he retired.

In their first public statements about the case, lawyers for the company and its charged co-CEOs criticized the Justice Department's handling of the investigation, suggesting prosecutors were fixated on landing a trophy target.

"For 30 years, Next Jump co-CEOs built an impeccable reputation for having developed some of the most well-respected leadership programs utilized by the U.S. Government, and it appears they are now unjustly caught up in a bureaucratic, politically motivated, governmental crossfire," Messenger attorney Rocco F. D'Agostino said in a written statement.

Next Jump attorney Reed Brodsky, a former Manhattan federal prosecutor who co-chairs the litigation practice at the Gibson Dunn & Crutcher law firm, said it was "very disappointed" in how the government pro-

ceeded in the months preceding the indictment.

"We tried on multiple occasions to present evidence and witnesses to the government after one presentation, but surprisingly the government refused to hear anything we had to say, declining to meet with Next Jump's counsel or even question Next Jump about the additional evidence we said we had in our possession," Brodsky said.

Legal experts said Kim and Messenger's combative defense is striking because prosecutors almost always seek to "flip" lower profile co-defendants in conspiracy cases and leverage their cooperation against top targets like Burke. The defense claims also raise the stakes for the Pentagon and Justice Department, which would be expected to have an airtight case given Burke's senior rank and recent setbacks in public corruption cases, legal experts said.

# RIMPAC has ship-sinking, 'experimentation'

By **WYATT OLSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — The massive former warship chosen for sinking at this year's Rim of the Pacific exercise should survive "multiple weapons" before it goes down, according to the vice admiral running the exercise.

The former USS Tarawa, an 820-foot-long amphibious assault ship, was towed to Hawaii several weeks ago in preparation for being sunk during RIMPAC, which began Thursday and runs through Aug. 2.

"It's a large vessel, as you know, and it's giving us an opportunity to conduct multiple serials, or multiple events, with

multiple weapons," Vice Adm. John Wade said Thursday during a harbor-side news conference at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

"And so, it gives us an opportunity to have a hulk that will last for hopefully a long amount of time, so we can get all of our drills through and successfully executed," he said.

Wade, previously in charge of defueling massive tanks at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, offered no further details.

Nor did he provide specifics about the roughly 30 "experimentation" events he said would test "new capabilities or use existing capabilities in different ways."

"There's going to be a num-

ber of experiments for the U.S. but also with our allies and partners," Wade said.

"I'm not going to go into specifics," he said. "But if I were to broadly cover how they will be organized, it's how we sense the environment, how we can conduct fires, how we move, how we sustain. And I would also highlight manned-unmanned integration. I think those are really important areas — and that's not just only in the air, but in the sea as well."

The biennial exercise, which first ran in 1971 and is touted as the world's largest international series of maritime military drills, has drawn 29 participating nations that brought 40 ships, 150 aircraft, three subma-

rines, 14 land-based armed forces and 25,000 personnel.

This summer's events include RIMPAC's largest-ever humanitarian aid and disaster relief drills, which will involve eight countries, five ships, five landing craft, five aircraft and over 2,500 participants.

Aircraft include F-35 Lightning II fighter jets, P-8 Poseidon reconnaissance planes and V-22 Osprey, which will operate out of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and Marine Corps Base Hawaii on Oahu.

Wade declined to answer numerous questions about Taiwan and its relationship with China saying only that the island was outside his area of responsibility as commander of 3rd Fleet.

## Marines use new missile in Pacific for first time

By **ALEX WILSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

A U.S. Marine Corps attack helicopter sank a moving training target in the Philippine Sea during a recent exercise, the first use of a new air-to-ground missile in the region, the Corps announced Friday.

An AH-1Z Viper attack helicopter from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 262 sank a towed training vessel Wednesday with an AGM-179 Joint Air-to-Ground Missile, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit spokesman Capt. Pawel Puczek said in a Friday news release.

It was the first use of the missile in the Indo-Pacific, according to information from the 31st MEU posted Thursday on the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service.

The precision-guided missile is intended for high value targets — moving or stationary — on land and at sea. It can also be used to "defend key maritime terrain against a wide-

range of targets from armored vehicles to maritime patrol craft during conflict," Puczek said in the news release.

Defending "key maritime terrain" applies to the Marine Corps' updated role as a "stand-in force" seizing islands within range of enemy fire to control key ocean straits in the chain stretching from Japan to the Philippines.

Refueling and rearming took place at a training area on Okinawa, and the live-fire exercise in the Philippine Sea, Puczek said.

The exercise allowed pilots to "increase their proficiency and get proof of concept on their tactics and targeting capabilities," he added.

The AGM-179, also known as JAGM, is the replacement for the laser-guided AGM-114 Hellfire missile and its radar-guided variant, the Longbow, that combines the abilities of both into one weapon, according to manufacturer Lockheed Martin's website.

## Air Force officer charged, fired after attack on family

By **COREY DICKSTEIN**  
*Stars and Stripes*

An Air Force officer has been removed from command of a special operations training squadron after his arrest last week on charges that he attacked his wife and child, according to service and law enforcement officials.

Lt. Col. Brent Byng had commanded the 19th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field in Florida for about one month before his June 23 arrest, according to the Air Force.

He was charged with felony counts of child abuse, obstructing justice, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and two counts of domestic battery by strangulation after his arrest by Santa Rosa County sheriff's deputies, according to his arrest report.

"Lt. Col. Byng was removed from command of the 19th Special Operations Squadron due to the ongoing investigation stemming from charged related to his arrest," an Air Force Special

Operations Command spokesperson said in a statement on Friday.

Byng, 44, is charged with choking his wife the evening of June 23 "until she could not draw breath" after accusing her of cheating and demanding she give him her phone, according to the arrest report.

His wife gave her phone to one of their two children in the house and told them to run away from Byng, according to the report.

Police said Byng then took out a small pocketknife and demanded the phone, following the children with the knife as they attempted to escape.

Byng grabbed the neck of one of the children and picked up the child before halting as a friend pulled into the driveway in a vehicle, according to the arrest report.

Byng's wife told police that she had her children hide inside the house and scaled a fence in the backyard to go to a neighbor's home to call the police.



# Pentagon, USAID to review pier in Gaza

BY MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The inspector generals of the Defense Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development announced Thursday that the agencies would open reviews into the U.S. military's floating pier used to transport humanitarian assistance to Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip.

Each review will focus on a different aspect of the mission to move aid from the sea into the embattled enclave. The Pentagon review will assess how effectively the military has facilitated the delivery of food aid. USAID's review will focus on the distribution side and evaluate how food aid has reached the agency's key partner in the region, the U.N.'s World Food Program.

"The agreements between the DOD and USAID establish roles and responsibilities that help enable U.S. humanitarian assistance to reach Gaza through the maritime corridor," Robert Storch, the Pentagon's inspector general, said in a statement. "Through our collaboration, we will leverage the unique expertise, resources and capabilities of our teams to optimize our oversight in this important area."

The Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS, pier is meant to provide another way to deliver needed aid into Gaza. Health officials have warned that millions of Gazans face extreme hunger as Israel continues its war against Hamas militants who launched a surprise assault in October from the enclave.

But the pier has been plagued with problems since May 17 when it became operational. The Pentagon announced less than two weeks later it would be removed for repairs after suf-

fering damage from rough seas and bad weather.

The pier became operational again June 7. Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, said at the time that the issue with the pier was "solely from unanticipated weather."

A week later, CENTCOM announced the pier was being temporarily removed due to high seas.

The pier was again reattached June 19, though Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the top Pentagon spokesman, told reporters last week it only became fully operational Tuesday after scheduled maintenance Monday.

Ryder said more than 6,800 metric tons, or 15 million pounds, of humanitarian aid had been delivered for aid groups to distribute.

News reporters were invited onto the pier last week for the first time since it has been used off the coast of Gaza. From the pier, they could see aid piling up against a backdrop of near-total destruction, The Associated Press reported.

While aid from the pier is reaching the beach, it's still difficult to get supplies to Palestinians in Gaza. The World Food Program has suspended aid delivery from the pier due to security concerns after the Israeli military appeared to use the area in a June 8 hostage rescue. Lawlessness around the pier, with hungry Palestinians seizing aid off trucks headed to delivery zones, is also a major concern according to the AP.

U.N. officials told the AP on Tuesday that they are considering suspension of aid operations across Gaza unless steps are taken to better protect humanitarian workers.

# US, Europe warn Hezbollah to ease strikes and back off

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — U.S., European and Arab mediators are pressing to keep stepped-up cross-border attacks between Israel and Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militants from spiraling into a wider Middle East war the world has feared for months. Iran and Israel traded threats Saturday of what Iran said would be an "obliterating" war over Hezbollah.

Hopes are lagging for a ceasefire in Israel's conflict with Hamas in Gaza that would calm attacks by Hezbollah and other Iranian-allied militias. With the stalled talks in mind, American and European diplomats and other officials are delivering warnings to Hezbollah — which is far stronger than Hamas but seen as overconfident — about taking on the military might of Israel, current and former dip-

lomats say.

The Americans and Europeans are warning the group it should not count on the United States or anyone else being able to hold off Israeli leaders if they decide to execute battle-ready plans for an offensive into Lebanon. And Hezbollah should not count on its fighters' ability to handle whatever would come next.

On both sides of the Lebanese border, escalating strikes between Israel and Hezbollah, one of the region's best-armed fighting forces, appeared at least to level off this week. While daily strikes still pound the border area, the slight shift offered hope of easing immediate fears, which had prompted the U.S. to send an amphibious assault ship with a Marine expeditionary force to join other warships in the area in hopes of deterring a wider conflict.

# Ukraine appeals to West to relax targeting limits

*Associated Press*

DONETSK REGION, Ukraine — Drone footage from Ukraine's military released Sunday has shown what appears to be bodies in a civilian area in the embattled town of Toretsk in the east of the country.

The town in the war-torn Donetsk region has come under heavy Russian bombardment in recent days, prompting a scaled-up evacuation effort by Ukrainian rescue services.

Local officials said powerful Russian glide bombs have also been used in the town, the latest eastern front flash point as Russian attacks continue to put stretched Ukrainian front-line units on the defensive.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday that Russia had dropped more than 800

glide bombs in Ukraine in the past week alone.

"Ukraine needs the necessary means to destroy the carriers of these bombs, including Russian combat aircraft, wherever they are. This step is essential," he wrote in an online post.

Ukraine is still struggling to stabilize parts of its front line after desperately needed military assistance was approved by the U.S. in April.

Zelenskyy called on countries assisting Ukraine to further relax restrictions on using Western weapons to strike military targets inside Russia.

"Clear decisions are needed to help protect our people," he said. "Long-range strikes and modern air defense are the foundation for stopping the daily Russian terror. I thank all our partners who understand this."

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Uber, Lyft agree to pay drivers \$32.50 per hour

**MA** BOSTON — Drivers for Uber and Lyft will earn a minimum of \$32.50 per hour under a settlement announced Thursday by Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell, in a deal that also includes a suite of benefits and protections.

The two companies will also be required to pay a combined \$175 million to the state to resolve allegations that the companies violated Massachusetts wage and hour laws, a substantial majority of which will be distributed to current and former drivers.

Campbell said the settlement resolves her office's yearslong litigation against the two companies and stops the threat of their attempt to rewrite state employment law by a proposed 2024 ballot initiative.

### State sees more Asians, Blacks, Hispanics

**TX** AUSTIN — Everything is bigger in Texas, including the number of residents of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds who joined the state's population last year.

The Lone Star State led all others in new Hispanic, Asian and Black residents in 2023. Among U.S. metro areas, Houston added the most Hispanic residents, and Dallas the most Asian and Black residents, according to population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Thursday.

Texas also had the biggest jump in the overall population, adding 473,000 people.

Nationwide, Hispanic resi-

dents propelled U.S. growth last year, accounting for almost three-quarters of the nation's population gain, according to the bureau's population estimates from 2022 to 2023.

Hispanic people, who can be of any race, are now the nation's second-largest demographic group, and births outpacing deaths made up most of the Hispanic growth last year.

### Ex-Honduran president sentenced in drug case

**NY** NEW YORK — Former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández was sentenced last week in New York for his conviction on charges that he enabled drug traffickers to use his military and national police force to help get tons of cocaine into the United States.

Judge P. Kevin Castel sentenced Hernández to 45 years in a U.S. prison and fined him \$8 million. A jury convicted him in March in Manhattan federal court after a two-week trial.

Castel called Hernández a "two-faced politician hungry for power" who protected a select group of traffickers.

Hernández, 55, served two terms as the leader of the Central American nation.

### Pair of pandas on their way to San Diego Zoo

**CA** SAN DIEGO — A pair of giant pandas were on their way from China to the San Diego Zoo as part of an ongoing conservation partnership, officials said Wednesday.

Officials with the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance were on hand in China for a farewell cer-

emony commemorating the departure of the giant pandas, Yun Chuan and Xin Bao.

The celebration included cultural performances, video salutations from Chinese and American students and a gift exchange among conservation partners, the zoo said in a statement. After the ceremony, the giant pandas began their trip to Southern California.

It could be several weeks before the pandas will be viewable by the public, officials said.

### Giant sinkhole swallows center of soccer field

**IL** ALTON — A giant sinkhole has swallowed the center of a soccer complex that was built over an operating limestone mine in southern Illinois, taking down a large light pole and leaving a gaping chasm where squads of kids often play.

Security video that captured the hole's sudden formation shows a soccer field light pole disappearing into the ground, along with benches and artificial turf at the city's Gordon Moore Park.

The hole is estimated to be at least 100 feet wide and up to 50 feet deep, said Michael Haynes, the city's parks and recreation director.

"It was surreal. Kind of like a movie where the ground just falls out from underneath you," Haynes told KMOV-TV.

### Cherokee Nation gets license for casino

**AR** LITTLE ROCK — The Arkansas Racing Commission on Thursday awarded Cherokee Nation Entertainment a license to build a

casino in the state that's been held up for several years by ongoing legal fights.

The panel voted unanimously to award the license for the casino in Pope County, the fourth and final casino allowed under a constitutional amendment voters approved in 2018.

Pope County was one of four sites where casinos were allowed to be built under a constitutional amendment that voters approved in 2018. Casinos have already been set up in the other three locations.

Cherokee Nation Entertainment has said it plans to build a 50,000-square-foot casino northeast of Russellville, 60 miles northwest of Little Rock.

Plans also call for a 200-room hotel, a conference center and outdoor music venue.

### Domestic workers set to get minimum wage

**RI** PROVIDENCE — Domestic workers in Rhode Island will now be paid the state's minimum wage under a bill signed into law by Democratic Gov. Daniel McKee.

Traditionally, domestic workers haven't been given that protection as the Rhode Island minimum wage has increased because under state law, they weren't considered employees.

The new law eliminates that exception.

Domestic workers in Rhode Island had previously only been guaranteed the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. The minimum wage in Rhode Island is currently \$14 per hour. It is set to increase to \$15 per hour on Jan. 1

— From Associated Press

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# Lyles keeps hope of Olympic double alive

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore.— In the wee hours the night before his 200-meter final, Noah Lyles sent a shout-out on social media to the sprinters in Jamaica, egging them on to help make the upcoming Paris Olympics great.

Then, the final rolled around, and all Lyles had to do was look two lanes to his right to see he had his hands full Saturday night right here in the U.S.

Lyles had to bust it through the finish line to overtake, then beat, Kenny Bednarek at the U.S. track trials, finishing in 19.53 seconds, the best time of the year, but a scant .06 clear of second place.

"I knew he was definitely working on something," Lyles said. "So I came off the turn and said 'OK, I'm fine. I've been here many times before. We're going to get to the last 80. He's going to fall, and I'm going to get faster.'"

It was more like the last 20

before there was any inkling that this race was wrapped up.

Still, the messages were the same: Lyles, who has only lost once at this distance at a major meet, knows how to win at his best distance, where he's a three-time world champion, from ahead and from behind; and Bednarek, who also finished second to Lyles in the 100, is going to make him earn it.

"I'm on his case right there," Bednarek said. "And I showed the world I've got a lot more in me and I've got more in the tank."

Lyles' 19.53 broke an Olympic trials record of 19.66 held by Michael Johnson since 1996. Erriyon Knighton finished third in 19.77, giving the U.S. three of this year's eight sub-19.8 runs in a single race.

"It's going to be great regardless but USA is USA," Lyles said when asked about the Jamaican shout-out. "We don't take anything lightly. We don't

give anything. You've got to take it from us."

Lyles' shout-out to Jamaica came a day after a relative unknown, Kishane Thompson, ran a world-leading 9.77 to win the 100-meter nationals. Thompson did not run in Saturday's 200 prelims in Kingston.

The U.S. has a long history of baton mishaps in the 4x100 relay, though a team headlined by Lyles won easily last year at worlds.

## Sha'Carri stumbles

Lyles' victory came about 90 minutes after this meet's other big name, Sha'Carri Richardson, slowed down in the homestretch of the women's 200 and finished fourth, depriving her of a chance to race in both sprints. Gabby Thomas won that title.

Then, as if to underscore the point that there are no sure things in track, Lyles took to the track and found the guy they call "Kung Fu Kenny" — in ref-

erence to the Asian-themed bandanas Bednarek wears — more than hanging in there once they hit the curve.

Instead of trying for an American or world record, as he suggested the night before that he might, Lyles simply had to hold off Bednarek, who said he tightened up over the last few steps and couldn't push hard to the finish.

All the late-race drama felt like filler to Lyles' coach, Lance Brauman, who only had one goal for his sprinter over these two weekends, which was to get him qualified for both sprints by finishing in the top three.

"As soon as I saw those two had cleared the rest of the field, I was like 'Whatever happens here happens here,'" he said. "It's a qualifying meet. Sure, winning here keeps his streak of winning going, but at the same time, it's not the end-all, be-all. You've got to be on the team."

# Bolts, Caps make significant trades on second day

Associated Press

It is retooling time around the NHL before the start of free agency, and a handful of teams in the Eastern Conference used the second day of the draft to shake up their roster for next season and beyond.

The Tampa Bay Lightning and Washington Capitals were the most active, each making two significant trades, while the Toronto Maple Leafs made one that might look minor on paper but could have a major impact on the next few chases for the Stanley Cup.

Tampa Bay sent two-time Stanley Cup-winning defenseman Mikhail Sergachev to Utah and depth forward Tanner Jeannot to Los Angeles in moves that cleared more than \$11 million in salary cap space.

"We started the day with little cap space to improve our

team," said general manager Julien BriseBois, who added the money will not immediately go to Steven Stamkos as the captain and longtime face of the franchise is expected to test free agency. "We got younger, and we now have a war chest of cap space to go out and improve our team in free agency."

The Lightning got 24-year-old defenseman J.J. Moser, along with forward prospect Conor Geekie and two draft picks for Sergachev, who was signed through 2031 and making \$8.5 million annually. A 2025 second-rounder and a fourth this year allows Tampa Bay to restock its prospect pool after making eight consecutive playoff appearances, winning two titles and reaching the Stanley Cup Final three times.

That contending window remains wide open, and Brise-

Bois now has flexibility to retool on the fly with free agency opening Monday. The Lightning wasted no time in making a move for a top winger by acquiring the rights to high-scoring Jake Guentzel on Sunday.

The Lightning sent a 2025 third-round draft pick to Carolina. The move allows the Lightning to sign Guentzel before he hits the open market.

"The hope is that this new-found cap space, our favorable taxation situation, the opportunity to be on a competitive team and to play with some great players should make us an appealing destination," BriseBois said.

The Capitals already did their big-name hunting last week by acquiring highly paid center Pierre-Luc Dubois from the Kings for goaltender Darcy Kuemper. On Saturday, they

filled that void in net by acquiring Logan Thompson from host Vegas for a pair of third-round picks.

GM Brian MacLellan called it "an opportunity to get a good goalie with some upside." Thompson figures to split time with Charlie Lindgren in a tandem costing less than \$2 million total next season, with a year left on each goalie's contract.

"It's below the (league) minimum, even," MacLellan said, referring to Thompson's \$767,000 salary. "There's value there just from the contract — and given the skill he has to play."

Thompson, 27, was an All-Star and played 37 games for the Golden Knights during their 2022-23 championship run before getting injured before the playoffs.



# James to sign new contract with Lakers

Associated Press

LeBron James is going to move toward a new contract with the Los Angeles Lakers. Paul George and Klay Thompson may simply be on the move to new teams.

And the NBA's free agency period, which officially started Sunday, suddenly has some intrigue.

James did not exercise his option to accept what would have been a \$51.4 million contract for this coming season and instead is seeking a new deal with the Los Angeles Lakers, a person with knowledge of the decision said Saturday.

The terms of the new deal could be finalized quickly, said the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because neither James nor the Lakers revealed the decision publicly. ESPN, The Athletic and the Los Angeles Times all reported the decision earlier Saturday.

Meanwhile, George made a similar decision, the nine-time All-Star choosing to not opt-in

for what would have been a \$48.8 million contract this coming season with the Los Angeles Clippers — a team that he's spent the past five years with, averaging 23 points per game. He'll become a free agent and is planning to talk to the Clippers about a new deal and also intends to hear pitches from Orlando and Philadelphia, plus potentially others, a person briefed on George's plans told AP on Saturday night.

Saturday's moves came just ahead of the NBA's free agency period, which formally opened at 6 p.m. Eastern on Sunday, though at least \$1.2 billion in contracts have already been agreed upon because of new rules that allowed teams to speak with their own players about new deals — in many situations — starting on the day after the NBA Finals.

Among those already having agreed to deals that cannot be finalized until the new league year opens July 6: Toronto teammates Scottie Barnes and Immanuel Quickley, Miami's

Bam Adebayo, Indiana's Pascal Siakam and New York's OG Anunoby.

It was expected that James would technically be a free agent. It's also been expected he would stay with the Lakers.

The Lakers selected Bronny James — LeBron James' oldest son — on Thursday in the second round of the draft, putting them in position to have the first on-court father-son duo in NBA history. And with a new deal, it's even possible that LeBron James could sign for a lower number than he could have commanded to give the Lakers additional financial flexibility for other moves.

"He is prioritizing a roster improvement," James' agent, Klutch Sports CEO Rich Paul, told ESPN on Saturday. "He's been adamant about exuding all efforts to improve the roster."

LeBron James is a four-time champion and is about \$20 million shy of becoming the first player in league history to top \$500 million in on-court earnings.

He'll turn 40 in December and will tie Vince Carter this season in terms of most seasons played in NBA history; the 2024-25 campaign will be James' 22nd in the league. He averaged 25.7 points, 7.3 rebounds and 8.3 assists last season.

And if he's going to leave money on the table, he's going to want the Lakers to sign an impact player who can help them contend for a title again. Among the Lakers' potential targets: Golden State's Klay Thompson, a free agent who could be on the move for the first time in his career.

Thompson, a starter on all four of the Warriors' championship teams of this era and half of the famed "Splash Brothers" duo alongside 3-point king Stephen Curry, has spent all 13 of his NBA years with Golden State. And his status is one of the biggest questions that'll be answered in the coming days. It may not be financially possible for Golden State to retain Thompson.

## Pereira retains UFC title belt with second-round TKO

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Alex Pereira first became a champion kickboxer and then moved to the UFC and won title belts in the middleweight and light heavyweight divisions.

And, after Saturday night's convincing victory over top-ranked challenger Jiri Prochazka in UFC 303, he might not be done.

Pereira could move up to heavyweight and do what no UFC fighter has ever accomplished — win championships in three weight classes.

He put himself in position after delivering a vicious left kick to Prochazka's head and then pounded him, ending the fight 13 seconds into the second round to retain his light heavyweight championship.

"I think that's in my future," Pereira, who is from Brazil, said through an interpreter. "I said that the last time I was here. I'm here, I'm available and I think that's in my best interest."

UFC President Dana White wasn't ready to

commit, noting his respect for heavyweight champion Jon Jones.

"We'll see how this whole thing plays out," White said.

Pereira (11-2) has now beaten Prochazka (30-5-1) twice since November to end any doubts about who reigns in that weight class.

Most of the drama at UFC 303 occurred outside the octagon in the weekend and even the hours leading up to the event.

"Hell of a month," White said. "It's been challenging, but fun."

Officials had to act quickly after a late change was needed in the co-main event when an illness forced Brian Ortega to drop out. Dan Ige was already in Las Vegas training for another fight and wound up taking on Diego Lopes in the lightweight fight.

All three judges scored the fight 29-28 in favor of Lopes (25-6) of Brazil. Ige (18-8), who is from Honolulu but lives in Las Vegas, was cheered loudly for showing up with little notice.

The UFC also scrambled to pair Pereira and Prochazka after scheduled headliner Conor McGregor's broken toe forced him to withdraw. They were given about two weeks to prepare after Pereira had his Australian vacation disrupted and Prochazka was interrupted while at a three-day meditation retreat.

A packed crowd of 18,881 that included New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers, sitting next to former Green Bay Packers teammate Marcedes Lewis, watched. Lewis now plays tight end for the Chicago Bears.

At \$15.9 million, it was the fourth-highest gate in UFC history. White had hoped to break the record, but not having the star power of McGregor likely kept that from happening. The highest gate is \$17.7 million for UFC 205 in November 2016 at New York's Madison Square Garden.

Pereira and Prochazka engaged in a lengthy staredown that carried through Bruce Buffer's fighter introductions and referee Herb Dean's instructions.

# Guerrero knocks in 6 in Blue Jays' win

Associated Press

TORONTO — Vladimir Guerrero Jr. homered for the sixth time in eight games and finished with six RBIs, Alejandro Kirk had two hits and two RBIs, and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the New York Yankees 9-3 on Saturday.

The Yankees, who won Friday to snap a season-worst four-game losing streak, lost for the 10th time in their past 13 games.

Isiah Kiner-Falefa had four hits and George Springer reached base three times as the Blue Jays won for the third time in four games since snapping a season-long seven-game losing streak.

"The biggest thing is that we're having fun," Guerrero said through a translator. "We're going to continue that way and hopefully continue to get some more wins."

The Blue Jays have scored at least five runs in a season-high six consecutive games.

Toronto's Chris Bassitt (7-6) allowed one run and six hits in six innings to win for the first time since June 2 against Pittsburgh. The right-hander was struck on the forearm by a 102 mph line drive from Yankees slugger Aaron Judge in the first inning, but remained in the game despite a noticeable welt on his pitching arm.

"I knew I was fine to stay in the game right away," Bassitt said. "I just wasn't too sure about the inning after that, and the inning after that. Obviously things like that tighten up a little bit. We just did enough to get by."

Bassitt had X-rays between the first and second innings, which did not reveal a fracture. After the X-rays, Bassitt put on a long-sleeve compression top beneath his jersey and wore it for the remainder of his outing.

**Braves 2, Pirates 1 (10):** Adam Duvall's single in the 10th inning drove in Luke Williams from second base and host At-

lanta overcame a strong start by Pittsburgh rookie Paul Skenes to win.

Duvall lined the single off Kyle Nicholas (0-2) to the wall in center field, bringing home Williams, who started the inning on second. Braves players charged out of the dugout to celebrate.

Skenes allowed one run on six hits in six innings and was typically dominant after giving up Jarred Kelenic's homer to open the game. Skenes struck out the side in the sixth, giving him nine for the game.

**White Sox 11, Rockies 3:** Paul DeJong homered and drove in three runs, and host Chicago beat Colorado for its third straight win.

Luis Robert Jr., Korey Lee and Lenyn Sosa also homered for the White Sox in their first double-digit scoring game of the season. Chicago finished with 12 hits in a matchup of baseball's worst teams.

**Reds 9, Cardinals 4:** Jonathan India doubled twice in his eighth consecutive multihit game, and visiting Cincinnati beat St. Louis.

India scored a run and drove in two more. He has at least one double in each of his last seven games. He is batting .512 (21-for-41) with one homer and six RBIs during an 11-game hit streak.

**Diamondbacks 3, Athletics 0:** Zac Gallen returned from a hamstring injury that sidelined him a month to pitch one-hit ball for six innings in host Arizona's victory over Oakland.

Ketel Marte had three hits and drove in a run to help the Diamondbacks snap a three-game losing streak.

**Marlins 3, Phillies 2:** Nick Gordon homered, Jazz Chisholm Jr. hit a go-ahead RBI single in the seventh inning and visiting Miami defeated Philadelphia.

Nick Fortes added an RBI double for the Marlins, who

have won two of three in the four-game series against the NL East-leading Phillies.

**Nationals 8, Rays 1:** Jake Irvin pitched six effective innings, CJ Abrams hit a leadoff homer and visiting Washington beat Tampa Bay, stopping a four-game skid.

Irvin (6-6) allowed one hit — Brandon Lowe's first-inning homer — struck out five and walked three. The right-hander has permitted two earned runs or fewer in 12 of his last 15 starts.

**Padres 11, Red Sox 1:** Manny Machado homered twice and drove in five runs, and Jackson Merrill and Brett Sullivan also went deep to carry visiting San Diego to its second straight lopsided victory over Boston.

It was the fifth straight win and ninth in 10 games for surging San Diego (46-41), which improved to a season-high five games over .500.

**Cubs 5, Brewers 3:** Ian Happ hit a two-run homer in the eighth inning and visiting Chicago beat Milwaukee, ending its winning streak at five games.

After Joel Payamps (1-4) came on and walked Seiya Suzuki to open the eighth, Happ sent a 1-0 pitch 394 feet to right-center for his 11th home run of the season.

**Guardians 7, Royals 2:** Jose Ramirez homered, Josh Naylor had a pair of RBIs and visiting Cleveland beat Kansas City.

A pair of solo home runs from Vinnie Pasquantino and Michael Massey were the only runs Tanner Bibee (7-2) gave up over six innings. He allowed four hits and struck out three.

**Astros 9, Mets 6:** Alex Bregman put visiting Houston ahead with a two-run single in the eighth inning, as it rallied from five runs down to beat New York.

Jake Meyers homered early and Jeremy Peña began the comeback with a two-run double off Mets starter Tylor Megill in a three-run fourth. After its

seven-game win streak was snapped Friday night in the series opener, Houston (41-41) won for the 11th time in 15 games.

**Orioles 6, Rangers 5:** Rookie Heston Kjerstad hit a fifth-inning grand slam to put host Baltimore ahead for good, and it held off Texas for its fourth straight victory.

Baltimore trailed 2-1 before using a double and two walks to load the bases for Kjerstad, who sent a 1-1 pitch from Michael Lorenzen (4-4) over the center-field wall. It was the fourth career homer and first slam for Kjerstad, the No. 2 pick in the 2020 draft.

**Dodgers 14, Giants 7 (11):** Will Smith knocked in two runs to start a seven-run 11th inning, and visiting Los Angeles beat San Francisco.

Smith, leading off the inning after Shohei Ohtani was intentionally walked, scored two runs with a hard double into the left-center field gap off Sean Hjelle (3-2). The Dodgers strung together five straight hits, with Freddie Freeman, Teoscar Hernández, Chris Taylor and Jason Heyward reaching base against Hjelle.

**Twins 5, Mariners 1:** Byron Buxton extended visiting Minnesota's home run streak to 18 straight games with a three-run shot in the sixth inning and Pablo López allowed one run over six innings to beat Seattle.

Minnesota improved to 5-3 on its current nine-game road trip and got the 5,000th win in franchise history since the Twins moved from Washington prior to the 1961 season.

**Angels 6, Tigers 5 (10):** Kevin Pillar's single with one out in the 10th inning drove in Taylor Ward and host Los Angeles extended its winning streak to six, rallying for a 6-5 victory over Detroit.

It was the fourth walk-off hit of Pillar's career and his first since 2018.